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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5919  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0352  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0396  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0552  
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0360  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0305  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0505

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 001259

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [MR](#)  
SUBJECT: UNDP DECLINES TO PRINT BALLOTS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 1235

Classified By: CDA Steven Koutsis, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

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(U) Summary  
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-- The issue of printing of ballots remains unresolved as the UN steering committee has decided not to take up the government's last minute offer to have the UNDP fund and control the ballot printing process.

-- UN rules regarding waiting periods for bids would make printing in time for the November 19 elections difficult to meet.

-- Therefore, the government is on the hook to fund and print the ballots. The UN will provide technical support if requested.

-- Meanwhile, the government has agreed to UN and partners' request to delay the second round of legislative elections until December 3.

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(C) Comments  
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-- There is still time to resolve the ballot issue to avoid delaying the November vote.

-- However, the lack of Mauritanian cooperation has created a level of mistrust with the Europeans (who are funding the lion's share of the electoral assistance) that will be difficult to mitigate in the short term.

End Summary and Comments.

1. (U) Basket fund steering committee members sent a letter October 20 to the Minister, Secretary General of the Presidency Habib Ould Hemet declining the government's last-minute request to have the UN fund and contract the printing of the ballots for the legislative and municipal elections to be held on November 19. The letter stated "UN request for tender procedures do not allow sufficient time, given the date we received your request, to guarantee the

printing and delivery of the ballots" by election day.

¶2. (U) According to UN ResRep Cecile Molinier, UN rules require a minimum of seven business days to submit bids after announcement of tender. Any waiver of the open bid process, including a limited tender to pre-qualified bidders, would require a waiver from UN headquarters, which would be unlikely in these circumstances.

¶3. (C) Molinier told charge she believes that the Mauritians -- too late -- realized the importance the EU had placed on this issue only after an October 17 meeting with EU ambassadors to discuss Mauritania's progress in EU-ACP Article 8 discussions. The loss of confidence was noticeable to the Mauritians, she said.

¶4. (C) Molinier noted that the UN would continue to work with the Mauritians to produce an acceptable ballot. However she could not be sure that the Senegalese company that the national printing company had subcontracted to has the capacity to add the necessary security features.

¶5. (U) The Basket Fund earmarked over USD 1 million for printing of ballots. The steering committee must now decide how else to spend that money.  
Koutsis